



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## THE RELATIONS OF THE ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY WITH ITS EMPLOYEES

---

BY C. D. EMMONS,

General Manager, Fort Wayne and Wabash Valley Traction Company, Fort  
Wayne, Ind.

---

With the evolution of methods of transportation from the horse car creeping along the streets at the rate of four to eight miles per hour, to the heavy, high-speed interurban cars rushing through the country at the rate of forty to sixty miles per hour, there has been a corresponding change in the relations of transportation companies with their employees.

The horse car, with its open vestibules, required men of great physical endurance, but possessing relatively low standards of skill, judgment or education. The superior officers of these men were generally known as drivers, and were very often of the character that would drink to excess and would lead the host in demonstrative cursing. The hours of the employes were long, and but little thought was given to their creature comforts or to the treatment accorded them. The change from the horse car to the high-speed city and interurban car required a higher grade employe, and to their credit be it recorded that many of the horse-car drivers proved themselves capable of the necessary evolution and made first-class motormen and conductors.

With the higher character of intelligence required the former robust physique and endurance began to disappear to some extent, and it was soon evident that the man himself must need some attention.

This has resulted in the establishment of many regulations and mutual relationships, among which are the following:

### *Reduction of Hours of Work and Increase in Scale of Wages.—*

With the increased nervous strain which was thrown upon the driver of a transportation vehicle in changing from a six-miles-per-hour horse car to the higher speed city and interurban car, it became apparent early that the employe could not work the long hours which were endured during the horse-car period. In consequence the number of hours which the employe works has been very greatly

reduced, while at the same time the higher grade of skill required has caused a corresponding increase in the scale of wages, so that to-day the transportation employe, by working from one-half to two-thirds of the number of hours which were required of the driver of the horse car, is drawing from two to three times the wages formerly paid. This has been a natural process, and we can but anticipate that as traffic becomes heavier and the streets more congested there will be, of necessity, still further adjustments of this character.

*Apprenticeship Courses.*—In order to satisfy the demand for a higher grade of employe many roads have established apprenticeship courses, designed to train young men who have had a higher education; preferably a college education. These men will start to work for the companies in the ranks, sometimes beginning as a motor-man or a conductor, or as a power house or car shop employe. After being given a certain amount of training in each department they are from time to time transferred to other departments, with the result that after several years of training they are well equipped for almost any position in the organization.

The education of future employes is a matter of great moment to transportation companies. If care is exercised in the selection and instruction of apprentices, especially as regards the necessity for close relationship between the company and its employes, the tendency will be to bring about greater harmony between the management and all of the employes.

At the same time employes who have been in the service for years, and who show a capability for higher positions, must not be neglected. Most companies have therefore established a system governing the advancement of valuable men.

*Promotion from Ranks.*—When a vacancy occurs in a higher position, it is important that the management should first give the greatest consideration to its own men, in order to discover whether there is among its employes a man who has shown sufficient capacity, ability, steadiness of purpose and loyalty to the company to warrant his promotion to the vacant position. No more effective step can be taken by a company than to have its men feel that if they show ability and capacity, they are all in line for any opportunity which may arise. Among the larger companies this relationship is being very gradually and firmly established.

*Establishment of Rest and Recreation Rooms.*—With the increased nervous strain upon the employe the necessity of conveniences for relaxation has become apparent. Many companies have established quarters at car barns and terminals which are conveniently fitted up with toilets, wash basins and individual lockers, and contain reading rooms with comfortable chairs, and files of the popular periodicals and transportation journals. Amusement rooms, containing card tables, checkers, and pool tables, have been frequently included. These provisions give the employe an opportunity to relax during his spare or waiting moments without visiting adjacent saloon or pool rooms and getting into company which is more or less demoralizing. It also enables the company more easily to find its men if needed unexpectedly. Large expenditures are constantly being made along this line, with great benefit to both the company and the men.

*Employees' Mutual Benefit Associations.*—These organizations have been of the greatest value in strengthening the ties between the electric railway and its employes. The idea is not a new one, for such organizations have been in existence for many years on important steam railway systems, such as the Pennsylvania and the Baltimore and Ohio.

The first organizations were prompted by the necessity of providing some relief for the unfortunate employe whose ability to earn his usual wages had been temporarily interfered with because of accident or illness. The old, and still much-used method, of "passing around the hat" is not only embarrassing to the employe for whom the solicitation is made, but a very great burden upon his friends who are charitably inclined.

The mutual benefit associations are usually independent of the railway company, although fostered and backed financially by it. By means of a small contribution each month the member employes make provision by which they will receive certain sums per day for sick and accident benefits. In the event of death a prescribed payment is made to the estate of the deceased employe. These associations have conferred untold benefits upon the employes of both steam and electric railways.

*Pension System.*—Many of these organizations have expanded and established a pension system by which an employe may be retired from active service at the age of 65 or 70. If an employe is permanently incapacitated by accident he receives a pension equiva-

lent to a certain percentage of his wages, based upon the number of years he has been engaged in the service.

*Employes' Saving Funds.*—Some roads, in order to encourage their employes to save money, have established a savings fund department. The employe can arrange to deposit a certain amount each month, and thus gradually, through his contributions and accrued interest, build up a very considerable bank account, without the necessity of going to or dealing with a banking house.

*Profit Sharing.*—Other roads, by means of a profit-sharing arrangement, endeavor to bring about a more intelligent interest of the employe in his work by dividing with him a certain per cent of the profits derived from the operation of the road. This incentive to closer relationship has not been tried on a sufficient number of roads or for a sufficient length of time to warrant any conclusions as to its success.

*Merit and Demerit System of Discipline.*—Perhaps the greatest cause for the lack of a close relationship between the electric railway companies and their employes is the system of administering discipline. Very few men, who have violated an order or rule, are ready to admit that they were at fault, and if, to their resentment at being so charged, a lay-off or suspension is added, they are very apt to become estranged and unruly members among the employes. During the period of suspension the employe is likely to get into bad company and become an undesirable citizen and a bad employe. In addition the loss of his wages causes not only suffering for himself, but also for his wife and children dependent on him. To avoid these things and to promote harmonious relations between the company and its employes many roads have adopted the merit and demerit system of discipline, the main objects of which are:

1st. To avoid a loss of wages by persons employed and consequent suffering to those dependent upon their earnings.

2d. To stimulate and encourage employes in the faithful and intelligent performance of their duties.

3d. To provide equal and exact justice to every employe.

4th. To provide a method by which years of faithful and satisfactory service may be considered and weighed in judging of any delinquency.

Under the system a stated number of demerits are entered against the record of each employe for the violation of each important rule. Where demerits are given for unsatisfactory service it

is logical that merits should be given for good service, and merit marks are credited to an employe whenever possible.

Employes are notified in writing of any favorable or unfavorable entry against their record, the reasons therefor, and the number of marks given. If any employe feels that he has been unjustly awarded demerits, he is given an opportunity to present his case in writing to the Discipline Committee at its next regular meeting, at which time his case is reconsidered and a correction of the record made, if this is found to be necessary and proper.

This method tends to remove the embarrassing difficulties which are presented when an employe is unjustly disciplined by some immediate superior. When an appeal is made to a higher official under the ordinary system a correction is hard to make, for, although the higher official may believe or know that the employe is in the right, he cannot take his side of the case openly, for by so doing he would cause the erring official to lose entire control of the men. All cases of discipline would in the future be appealed directly to the higher official. Under the merit system employes are permitted to state in writing why they believe they should not receive demerit marks, or may ask the merit board to reconsider its action if they are not satisfied with the rulings of the board.

This system necessitates identical treatment of all employes on all divisions of any property, especially where the merit board is made up of the superintendents of the different divisions. In many cases the different superintendents differ as to the discipline which should be administered. A majority vote of the board decides the question, thus usually securing the best possible adjustment, besides establishing a uniform practice. Questions which an individual superior officer would be at a loss to know how to decide are satisfactorily worked out through the combined knowledge of the members of the discipline board.

*Conclusion.*—It seems to be apparent that the keynote of the policy of most electric railways at the present time is the necessity for fair, impartial and humane treatment of their employes, caring for their physical comforts, and so treating them that a spirit of courtesy to the public and loyalty to the companies may be fostered. Not only is this policy commendable from a humanitarian standpoint, but it is conclusively demonstrating its value as a financial measure. The creation of an *esprit de corps* is a valuable asset to any company.